



**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
15th October 2024 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

Philip Ham (PH) Councillor Somerset Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Operations Manager
Alexandra Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
Samantha Stagg (SS) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies and Travellers)
Somerset Council
Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
Simon Clegg (SC) Nunney Parish Council
Ian Strachan (IS) Heidelberg Materials, Strategic Development Manager
Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials Regional Transport Manager
Jess Bloomer (JB) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials
Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust
PC Toni Lines (TL) Avon and Somerset Police

Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair

- **Welcome and Chair introductions**
- **Apologies**
- **Review of minutes from last meeting**
- **Matters arising from last minutes**

2. Whatley quarry update (Vincent Pitt, Operations Manager Whatley quarry)

- **Operational overview**
- **Logistics (including road and rail)**
- **Feedback**
- **Community giving update**
- **Whatley ROMP /Westdown update (NB: Trystan Mabbitt is not able to attend this meeting).**

3. Environmental Update (Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect)

4. Any other business

5. Date of next meeting

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

- The Group confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters Arising – AH clarified that the numbers of bats recorded are just low, not lowering in number. If we can keep people out now that the area is fenced off it might improve the numbers but there is a downward trend nationally.

2. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview:

- VP provided an update on production and sales volumes year to date. Due to de-stocking sales came in higher than production year to date (YTD) . A lot of the sales are in the local area from new customers, and as a result of poor availability at other local quarries.

ABR asked why there was lower production than sales. VP replied due to de-stocking, as we need to move stock that is sitting on top of quarry reserves, to make it available to blast.

Capex

- Track replacement completed for 2024.
- Further £600k investment in 2025 upgrading railway lines (work takes place during the day). Part of a 5-year plan to replace the rail infrastructure.
- New welfare facilities due to be complete by end of the year, starting in November.
- New electric locomotive trialling shortly, and if successful will look to purchase 2 on site in 2025. The trial will be used to test How long the batteries will last, the weights they can pull and the charging times.

EK asked if there is capacity to charge in the local area, and VP responded this would be assessed as part of the trial. Planning to instal a supercharger in the sidings may be considered.

Projects

- Tip recycling project ongoing. Currently recovering 13% of recycled materials through the plant.
- New viewing platform on quarry footpath to be installed Spring 2025. It will be at the far West end of site. There will also be works to the footpath around the quarry as there are parts missing in Mells Green. An information board will also be installed.

Recruitment

- 2 Higher Apprentices and 1 Engineering Graduate started September 2024
- Continuing recruiting for a number of roles, including 2 in maintenance team (nights).
- Recently appointed new Engineering Manager based in Shepton Mallet.
- Details at: www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/careers

Blasting Operations:

VP provided an update on quarry blasting:

- Will be installing additional vibration monitoring in Whatley and Mells shortly. As the blasting is progressing east, we wanted to monitor in these villages.
- 2024 YTD (until end 10 October): Average highest PPV recorded: 2.64 mm/s (average for 2023 2.74 mm/s)
- Of the 96 blasts to 10 October 94% were at, or below, 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry).
- 100% of blasts to 10 October within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.

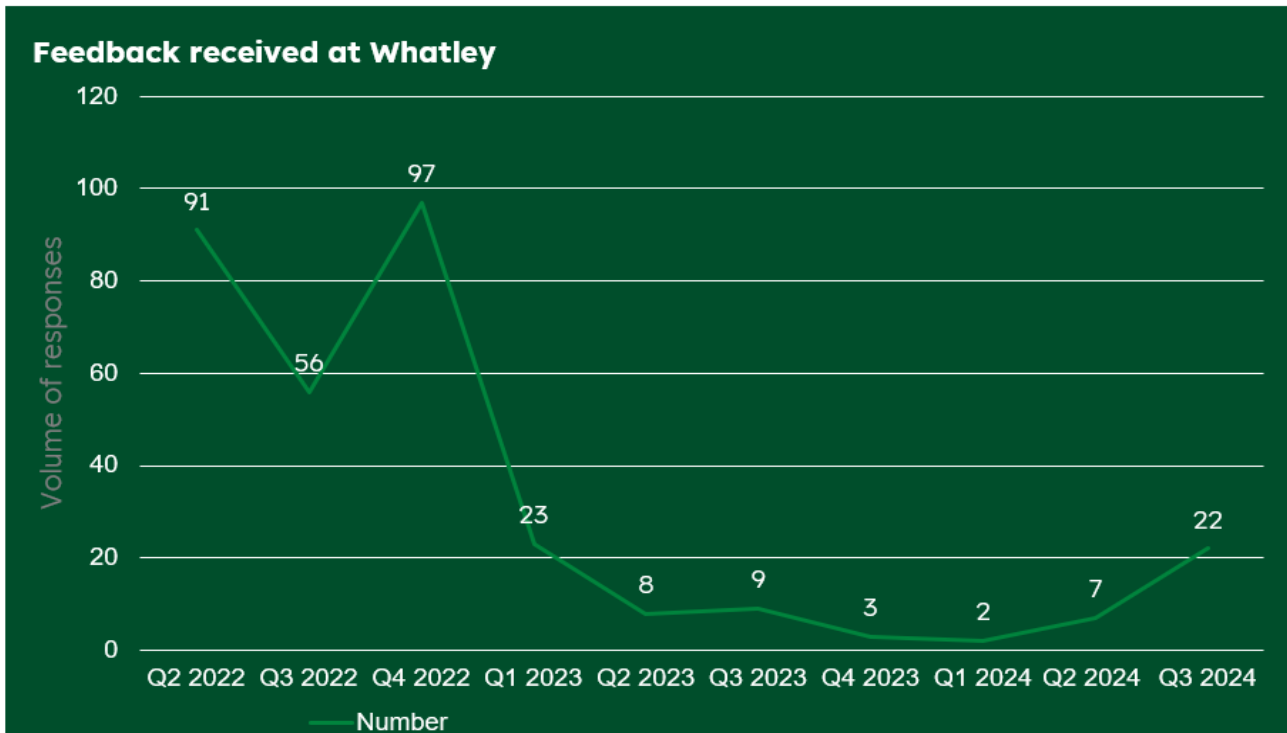
ABR asked how the average highest PPV was calculated.

Blast vibration is measured in Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) mm/s. It is measured across three planes - vertical, horizontal and transverse.

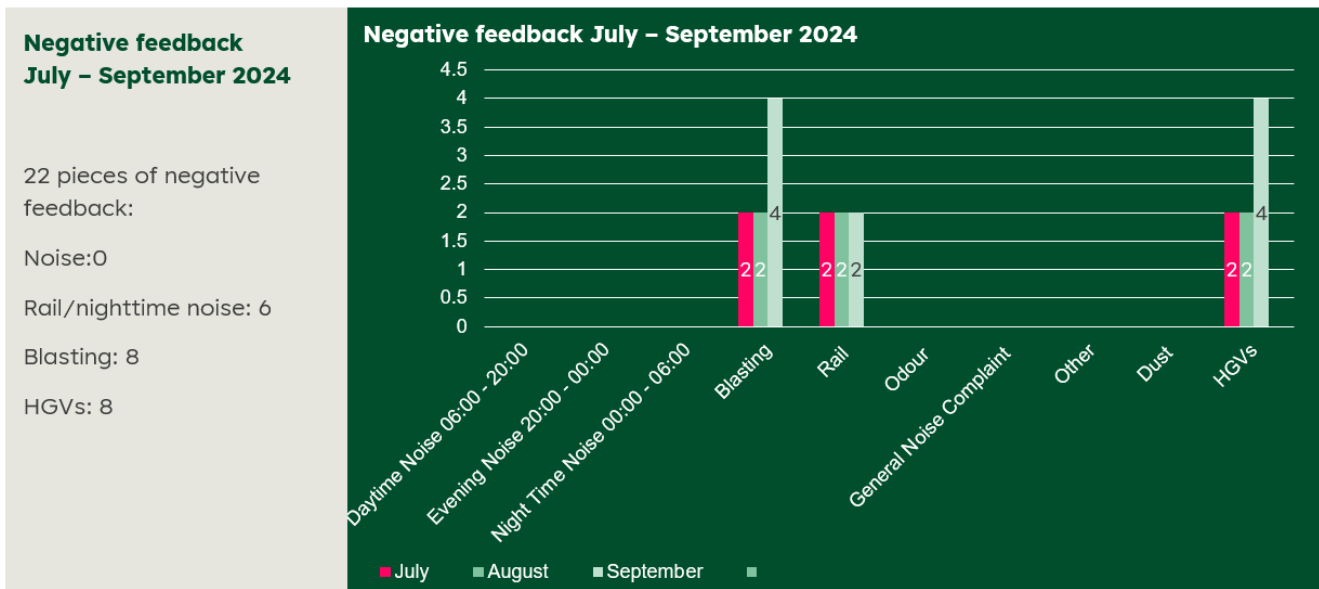
It is only the highest of these three that is recorded as the highest PPV mm/s reading for that blast at that location.

This means that only the highest reading across all planes at all monitored locations for that blast that is used when calculating the average blast PPV over a given time period. An average of all the readings of all planes monitored at all monitoring locations would therefore be much lower.

Feedback



SS provided information on feedback received: There has been an uptick in negative feedback in Q2 2024. See diagrams shared at meeting below:



Rail/Night-time noise

SS explained that the rail noise and night-time noise were grouped together due to the time of day of the complaints received.

VP confirmed that only rail would be working at the times of these complaints.

SW mentioned he had 2 noise complaints from the same couple from the 7th October 22:30. Requested we check and follow up with him. SW has offered to go and see them to listen when there is noise, however not yet been invited. Resident asked if it could be gear changes, however SW has explained they don't have gears. VP has said he would be happy to bring them to the quarry to see the operations.

VP added we are always looking to improve and use new tech to help with noise reduction. Expecting the opening of Westdown will improve the noise issues.

ABR asked if we reply to complaints received as he hasn't seen any responses. SS explained we respond only to the person complaining, for GDPR purposes.

Re HGVs:

- Driver Do's and Don'ts distributed to all drivers via the weighbridge (see below)
We have had a couple of complaints since giving them out and we have contacted these hauliers to explain consequences if this continues. Anyone caught deviating from the route will be banned.
- Contacted all hauliers involved in recent transgressions.

Noise:

- Primary continues to be shut off at 22:30
- Increasing handheld monitoring by trained employee, in the area including Mells triangle, outside old rectory and viewing platform.
- Continuing to research new technologies to support noise reduction.

Re vibration:

- Additional monitoring in Whatley and Mells Green getting underway

Driving best practice at Whatley quarry

Help us be a good neighbour by always complying with our code of conduct for drivers

<p>Do ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adhere to Somerset's designated traffic routes. ■ Respect the speed limit and always follow the Highway Code. ■ Ensure your vehicle is fully sheeted on leaving site. ■ Drive slowly through the wheel wash to ensure it is as effective as possible. ■ Be courteous and considerate in all interactions with members of the public. ■ Always stop and report any damage or incidents to the weighbridge. ■ Use Sat Navs set for HGVs. 	<p>Don't ✗</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Drive through surrounding villages – Chantry, Mells, Whatley and Nunney unless delivering in the immediate vicinity. ■ Turn your vehicle around in residential driveways. ■ Pull out in front of other road users. ■ Break the speed limit. ■ Arrive on site with a damaged net: your vehicle will not be loaded. ■ Use bad language or inappropriate behaviour. ■ Drive through highway weight limit restrictions, unless the delivery point is within the restricted area. ■ Drive on the pavement (footpath) or grass verges. 	
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Contact details:
Tel: 0800 644 4234 | Email: whatleyquarry@uk.heidelbergmaterials.com

Community update

SS gave an update on charitable contributions.

- Leigh on Mendip benches for cemetery extension
- Donate IT
- 40 hours donated on JCB to Coleford allotments at Vobster.

£28,500+ committed so far this year. Lots of pledges from 2023/2024 are now coming to fruition.

Committed to supporting Whatley walk: summer 2025

Environmental update

Vallis Vale

- Monitoring of Mells Valley SAC bat cave are ongoing. Currently returning low numbers of Greater and Lesser horseshoe bats using site so far this year. 6 static bat detectors employed to record and understand how bats are using the vale.
- Residents previously have expressed concern that the felling had impacted the use of the site by owls as anecdotally they were hearing fewer birds hooting. First Ecology do not believe that this is the case due to the size of range that owls have. However we have erected 4 tawny owl boxes to ensure that nesting and roosting opportunities are available. SW asked if Tawny owl boxes are different. AH explained there are different shaped boxes for some types of owl.
- Lime kilns now all cleared except for a couple of trees that require MEWP access.
- Trees that are naturally regenerating within Vallis are to have protective tree shelters put on them starting this week with 800 trees to be found. 4x4m fenced areas also to be installed to allow natural regeneration of level areas.
- First drafts of the proposed information boards for the site have been prepared and this will progress as time allows.
- The Wild Trout Trust have provided a proposal for works to repair the riverbanks and footpaths along the Egford Brook which is to be reviewed and progressed.

Whatley

- The bridge in our fields at the bottom of Railford in the dip from Chantry has been repaired having received approval for the works from the EA.
- Footpath repairs scheduled for late August are ongoing with some works still to be completed.
- A new large standard oak tree has been planted to commemorate our colleague Andy Clemence who had worked as a surveyor for Hanson for 30+ years and sadly passed away last year.

Asham

- Bridleway improvement works through old quarry by Tor are complete.
- A draft update to the woodland management plan has been delayed slightly but is now expected in the next few weeks and will be discussed on site with Natural England and Somerset Wildlife Trust.
- Monitoring of bats in the old conveyor tunnel in Asham quarry are ongoing with again low numbers of Greater Horseshoe bats recorded.
- We have committed to support 4 more SWT coppicing days in the woodland this winter.

Planning update

TM was not at the meeting to be able to provide an update however AH said Heidelberg Materials has been liaising with SC based on the section 106 documents and has worked with SC re habitat creation and has done lots of work on biodiversity.

Information shared after the meeting from Helen Vittery - Service Manager – Resources, Integration, Minerals and Waste

Wider picture

- We have had no issues reported that require investigation in relation to Whatley, which we take as a positive sign.

Plan-it Somerset Newsletter:

- If anyone wants to be kept updated with the Somerset Local Plan, Parish Neighbourhood Plans, Planning Policy Consultations and more, they can register here: [Plan-it Somerset Newsletter Sign-up](#)

Somerset Economic Strategy

- The new Somerset Economic Strategy is currently in the early stages of development and is being overseen by the Somerset Economic Growth Board.
- Work has started on developing a vision for Somerset's economy and a set of draft priorities. Stakeholder sessions are planned for November/December.

Somerset business newsletter

- If anyone is interested in this, they can register here: [Somerset Council \(govdelivery.com\)](#)

AOB

SW asked when we might start quarrying at Westdown. AH advised they were currently updating the surveys, and it depends on the sign-off on section 106. VP said he would like it to happen for Q1 2026. AH added she would hope to start the vegetation clearance this time next year. VP would like to put the new entrance in before the vegetation clearance, however prospective contractors will need to go through procurement beforehand.

EK asked about the life of the batteries and how old ones would be disposed. VP added this would also be considered when looking at a new locomotive. Once we know the battery life, we will adhere to correct disposal legislation. VP said he will ask about this in the 2-week trial. PH added that he will ask the council regarding the new battery factory being built in Somerset.

Next meeting date

The next meeting will take place on TUESDAY 14TH January 2025 at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Further meeting dates are:

1st April 2025

Meeting Ends 18:32